

*We love because he first loved us.*

*– 1 John 4:19*



# The Messenger

Red Oak First United Methodist Church ♦ Jenn Van Nostrand, Pastor ♦ February 2024

## From Jenn's Pen

*"If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday." Isaiah 58:9-10*

The season of Lent is upon us friends! Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which is February 14, the same day as Valentine's Day! What a special way to celebrate the greatest love we have ever known!

I am especially looking forward to Lent this year. Our sermon series is called *"Drink from the Fountain of Grace,"* created by the United Methodists of Greater New Jersey Conference. I love that we are a connectional church, sharing meaningful resources.

God sustains us in the most basic of human ways, physically, with food and drink, and spiritually-with food for our souls. This Lent, as we remember what it means to be human, we find refreshment from God's fountain of grace. The different images of cups shown in Scripture will serve as a touchpoint for exploring aspects of our relationship with God. What does our brokenness say about us? What does discipleship look like? What does it mean to seek justice? This exploration culminates in the most exciting celebration of all-that Jesus is risen for us and we have new life in him!



So you can plan accordingly, please plan on attending these Lenten services.

**Wednesday, Feb 14** – JOINT Ash Wednesday service at 2pm in Villisca

**Thursday, March 28** – JOINT Maundy/Thursday service at Red Oak at 6pm with meal being served.

**Sunday, March 24** – JOINT Palm Sunday Service at 10:30 in Villisca; Easter Cantata

**Friday, March 29** – JOINT Good Friday service at Red Oak at noon; Villisca ICC JOINT service at 7pm at Presbyterian Church

**Sunday, March 31** – Easter Sunday in each location. No Joint service.

To help us remain focused on the meaning of Lent, I want to encourage you to participate in two Lenten projects this year.

1) Read through the book of Mark each day of Lent, except Sundays. A sheet with each day's passages can be found at the church and in this newsletter. A text group will be created for those who would like to discuss each day's passage. Please let the office know if you plan on participating and if you would like to be a part of the text group or not. If you want to be a part of the text group, please give the Administrative Assistant your cell phone number.

2) Every day during Lent, except Sundays, we will be collecting coins based on a calendar that tells us how much to collect. An example is, put a coin in for each pair of shoes in your closet. The calendars can be found at the church and in this newsletter. We will be collecting the coins as part of our "Do Something" challenge and the church who collects the most money will get the traveling trophy. The money collected will be going to each community's emergency funds which provides resources for those who have need for gas, utility bills, rent assistance, and other needs.

I pray you will fully participate in the Lenten services and activities. This will allow us to fully embrace the Lenten season.

God bless you Beloved,

Pastor Jenn





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1/24/2024

Dear Pastor Van Nostrand and Red Oak, First United Methodist Church,

God's grace and peace to you! I am writing today to celebrate that your congregation increased in your apportionment giving for 2023! I know how hard you all have worked to make this possible and I am so proud.

At the beginning of 2023, I issued the challenge for us to be the top District in apportionment giving; and we did it this year! Our District giving held steady at 78% of the total apportionment ask – next year I know we can break over 80%. I believe in us! Your congregation is a leader and an example for the Aldersgate District, and I want to thank you for the faithfulness that has made your 2023 giving possible.

I am grateful for your continued support of the ministries of the United Methodist Church here in the Iowa Annual Conference and throughout our global denomination. As we move forward as proud United Methodists, your congregation, and our district as a whole, have demonstrated that we believe that we can do more together than we can apart, and that when we pool our connectional giving resources, we believe that we can transform the world. Your congregation's giving allowed our district to give away \$25,000 of grant monies to local ministries, right here in the district, through the Matthew 25 fund. On the Conference level, your connectional giving has helped support congregations that went through a challenging disaffiliation season and are now in a position to rebuild and reenergize their commitment to the United Methodist Church. On a global level, your congregation's connectional giving continues supports the administrative costs for ministries like UMCOR, which shows up as first responders nationally and globally when there are disasters, which allows for all direct donations to UMCOR to go directly to the individuals and communities impacted.

Your congregation's commitment to the mission and ministries of the Iowa Annual Conference and the greater connection is evidence of your belief that the world needs the United Methodist Church, and I honor that commitment. I pray that as we continue to grow as an Aldersgate People, that your hearts may once again be strangely warmed; that we will not keep quiet about the good work that God is doing in and amongst us; and that we continue to grow in our connection to each other and our local communities for the sake of God's love.

Blessings to you,

Rev. Melissa Drake, Aldersgate District Superintendent

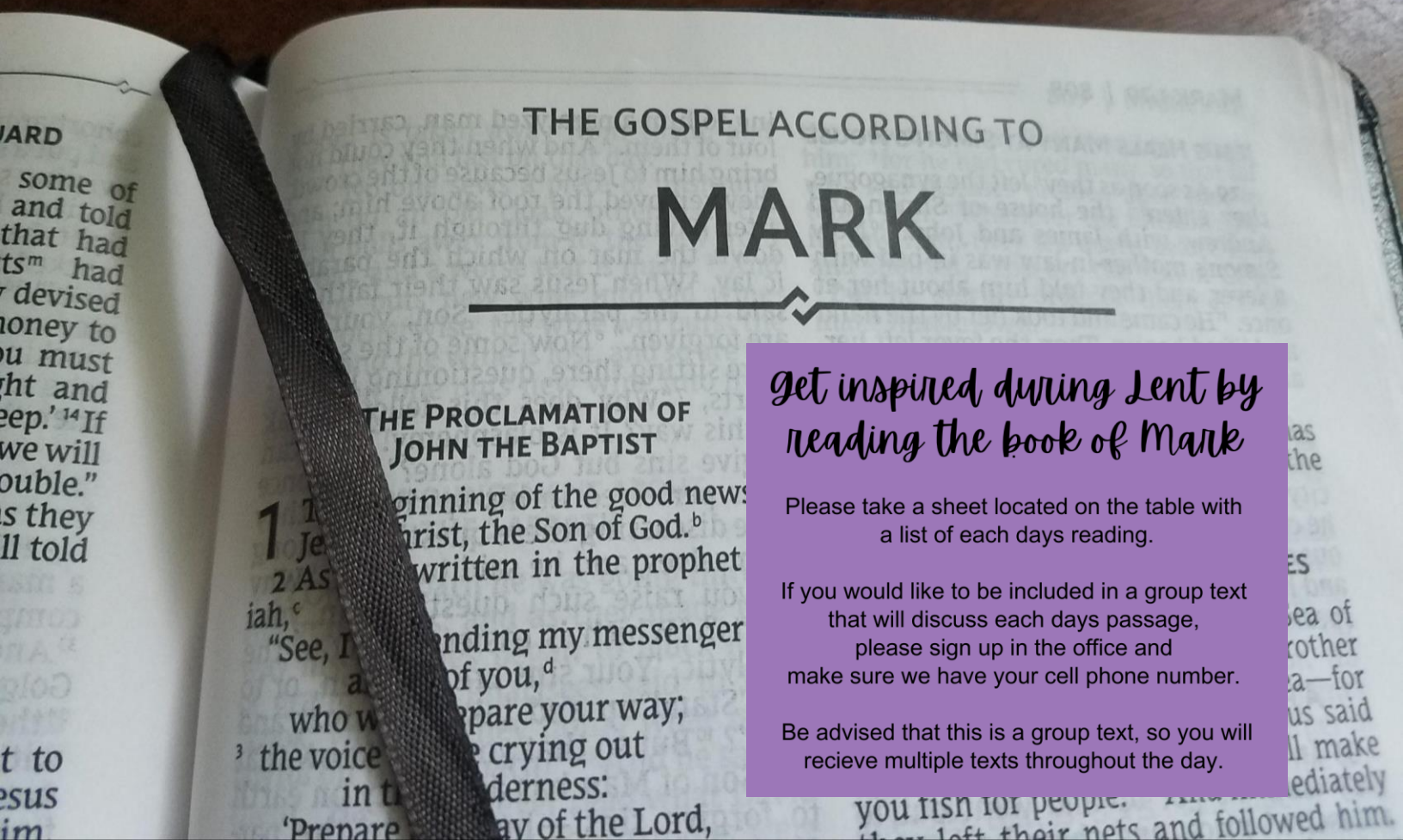
## Do Something Challenge....

Each day during Lent, we will collect coins for things we have in our homes.

Take a calendar on the table and start collecting coins for what is listed on each day.  
(Denomination does not matter)

At the end of Lent, the church with the most money gets the "Do Something" traveling trophy.

Money collected will go to Feed the Pack in Villisca and Red Oak's emergency fund, used to help people with utilities, rent, and gas.



## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

### THE PROCLAMATION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

1 In the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.<sup>b</sup>  
2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,<sup>c</sup>  
"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,<sup>d</sup>  
who will prepare your way;  
3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord,

*Get inspired during Lent by reading the book of Mark*

Please take a sheet located on the table with a list of each days reading.

If you would like to be included in a group text that will discuss each days passage, please sign up in the office and make sure we have your cell phone number.

Be advised that this is a group text, so you will receive multiple texts throughout the day.

## February Highlights...

Have you noticed our church lobby looking a little dated? Several people in our church family have volunteered to update it a little. Over the next few weeks, we'll see a welcome change to our welcome area!



Plan now to be at church on February 11<sup>th</sup> to welcome Pastor John Van Nostrand to the pulpit for our **Pastor Swap!**

Pastor Jenn will preach at John's church in Orient and Pastor John will preach at our church and Villisca UMC. Don't miss it!!

Lent begins February 14<sup>th</sup> on Ash Wednesday. Please join us for a very special **Service of Ashes** **Wednesday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 pm** **at Villisca UMC**



*A special request –*

We're looking for a little help on Sundays.

**Ushers** – Help with our Sunday morning greetings, offerings, etc. Choose the Sunday(s) you want to lend a hand.

**Acolytes** – Light the altar candles at the beginning of our church service. Once a month... or once a quarter...or whenever you want.

**An important all-church meeting is on the calendar!**  
**You won't want to miss**  
**Sunday, April 7<sup>th</sup>.**  
**Make plans now to be with us.**



# LENT

We're approaching the season of Lent. Most of us know about Lent — it lasts 40 days, leads to Easter, and suggests giving up something. But there's more to remember about this very special season.

## 40 days

For most Christians, including United Methodists, Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. This time period on a calendar lasts 46 days, but United Methodists and many other protestant denominations don't count Sundays in Lent. Each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter." On each Lord's Day in Lent, while Lenten fasts continue, the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection.

The forty days of Lent represent the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, fasting and enduring the temptations of Satan in preparation for his ministry. It's a time of self-examination and reflection. United Methodists are encouraged to focus on relationship with God, growing as disciples, and extending ourselves, often choosing to give up something or to volunteer and give of ourselves for others. Lent is a perfect time to add a Lenten spiritual discipline, such as reading a daily devotional or praying through a Lenten calendar (like the one Pastor Jenn gave us) to draw ourselves nearer to God.

## Ash Wednesday

The first day of Lent is marked by Ash Wednesday. There are instances in the Old Testament where people used ashes to symbolize penance, mourning, and humiliation. United Methodists first adopted an official ritual for Ash Wednesday that involves the use of ashes in the 1992 Book of Worship. Ashes demonstrate an awareness of mortality and an intent to repent. The ashes used for Ash Wednesday often come from burnt palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday. Through the service of ashes on the first day of Lent, we come before God recognizing our humanity, repenting of our sin, and remembering who we are and who we can be.

## Fasting

For ancient Hebrews, fasting was a form of penance and humility before God. Early Christians also fasted to remember Jesus' 40-day fast before his public ministry. John Wesley fasted regularly, calling it one of the "acts of piety," along with praying and studying the Bible. Although the United Methodist church doesn't require fasting during Lent, it is often encouraged. Every mealtime or any time you feel hunger pangs, use that time for praying instead of eating. It's an opportunity to focus on your spiritual hunger instead of your physical hunger. If you can't or don't want to fast from food, choose something else that consumes your focus. Determine a period of time each day or week to abstain from or restrict certain types of food like chocolate or pizza, TV, social media, shopping, gossip, laziness, or anything else you normally "covet."

## The Color Purple

The first color used for Christian liturgical vestments was white, the color of the Resurrection. By the Middle Ages, other colors had been adopted. Purple, the color of kings, was quickly associated with Christ. The red-toned purple of Lent reminds us of the color of blood and symbolizes the Lord's Passion.

## Almsgiving

Lent emphasizes the Christian call to almsgiving or caring for others. Jesus gave special attention to the poor. Although this should be an ongoing focus of our, it is especially relevant during Lent.

# February 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>Red Oak First United Methodist Church            600 East Hammond Street            Red Oak, Iowa 51566            712-623-2367            Email: office@redoakfumc.org            Website: redoakfumc.org            Office Hours: 9am – 1pm Monday-Friday</p>					<p>1            Groundhog Day  </p>	<p>3            Lena Torbett            Adrian Guerra            Jordan Vrba            Molly Smith</p>
<p>4            9 – Church            10:15 – Sunday School</p>	<p>5            9 – WIC Clinic            Mary Marshall            Jane Waltz</p>	<p>6            10 – Three Simple Rules Bible Study            Stan Smith</p>	<p>7            10:30 – Nishna Game Day            5 – Choir Practice</p>	<p>8            Jenn at Course of Study class via zoom from 8 – 5            Jeff Bumison</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10            Jerry Stanley</p>
<p>11            9 – “Pastor Swap”            10:15 – Sunday School            12 – SouperBowl Lunch of Caring at Villisca Community Center</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13            (10 – No Bible Study)            Jenn’s RIM Zoom Meeting 9-12            2 – Women’s Fellowship            Raymond Olsen</p>	<p>14            Happy Valentine’s Day            11:30 – Nishna Pizza Lunch            2-Ash Wednesday Service in Villisca            5 – Choir Practice</p>	<p>15            Jenn’s COS Assignment Due            Vayda Fisher</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>18            9 – Church            10:15 – Sunday School</p>	<p>19              Presidents’ Day</p>	<p>20            10 – Fountain of Grace Bible Study              Shrove Tuesday Mardi Gras            Trinity LaMar</p>	<p>21            5 – Choir Practice</p>	<p>22            Jenn’s COS Assignment Due</p>	<p>23            Nicole Fisher            Donna Walford</p>	<p>24            Aviana Andre</p>
<p>25            9 – Church            10:15 – Sunday School</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27            10 – Fountain of Grace Bible Study            6 – Ad Board</p>	<p>28            5 – Choir Practice            Callie Yeager</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>